United Nations A/53/PV.13

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Thursday, 24 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Natural disasters in the Caribbean

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the members of the General Assembly and on my own behalf, I wish to express and convey to the Governments and peoples of the countries of the Caribbean region, which were recently struck by a devastating hurricane, incurring loss of lives and significant material destruction, our most profound condolences on the tragic deaths and damage. I also express the hope that the international community will display its solidarity by responding rapidly, generously and effectively to the requests for assistance from those countries in the current crisis.

Address by Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, His Excellency Mr. Jacob Nena, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nena: It is my high honour to address the Assembly today, both as the Chairman of the South Pacific Forum and as the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

First of all, Mr. President, for the South Pacific Forum and for my country, I wish to express sincere congratulations on your election to the highest position one can hold in this body. We are confident that your strong experience and leadership will provide the rudder that is needed here to steer us safely through the many challenges that lie ahead.

I also thank the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for his skilful guidance throughout the past year during most difficult and troubling times.

Recognition also must be given to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose tireless and effective work in both leadership and coordinating roles is well known to all of us.

The Federated States of Micronesia was honoured to host the twenty-ninth summit of leaders of the South Pacific Forum in Pohnpei on 24 and 25 August. As a result, I have the privilege and heavy responsibility of reporting to this organ the consensus achieved by all 16 member countries of the Forum at that summit.

The South Pacific Forum is a unique institution involving independent and self-governing States which

98-85870 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

share a very special part of the world. Forum member countries differ greatly in land area, ocean area, population, resource endowment, economic development and industrialization, social structures, cultures and living standards. However, we all share a common bond as Forum members and have established agreed positions on a wide range of issues which transcend our diversity. We have also agreed to work together to pursue cohesion, stability and well-being in our countries.

At the recent summit, the heads of Government and representatives of the 16 member countries reviewed progress and took decisions on a number of issues considered important to the region, which were generally of a political, economic or environmental nature. I will mention briefly some of the subjects that were discussed and refer for further details to the Forum communiqué, which is to be issued as a document of this General Assembly.

The overall theme of the Forum's summit this year was "From Reform to Growth: The Private Sector and Investment as Keys to Prosperity". In this regard, the Forum agreed that efforts should be made to ensure macroeconomic stability by improving fiscal discipline, further promoting public sector reforms and broadening the tax base. It also emphasized the need to introduce a wide range of policy, legal, regulatory and institutional reforms which provide the private sector with a more favourable and competitive business environment.

Leaders noted that good overall progress has been made in the implementation of the Forum Economic Action Plan, which aims at strengthening the economies of the island countries. This progress was made despite such difficulties as capacity constraints facing some members, the backdrop of region-specific difficulties, notably drought and other disasters, and the problems faced by member countries on account of the Asian economic crisis. Specific recommendations were endorsed concerning the region's response to undesirable economic activities, the promotion of competitive telecommunications markets, the development of information infrastructure and work related to the Forum Free Trade Area.

On a related matter, the Forum revisited the objective of having the United Nations adopt a vulnerability index, with the aim of having such an index included among the criteria for determining least developed country status and deciding eligibility for concessional aid and trade treatment. It was noted with pleasure that the United Nations Economic and Social Council had agreed to defer consideration of Vanuatu's graduation from least developed country status for one year, pending further consideration of the vulnerability index issue, and that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have created a task force on the subject. While these steps have been important, much work remains ahead to gain full international recognition of vulnerability in its various manifestations as obstacles to the sustainable development of small island developing States.

The Forum solidly reaffirmed its previous endorsement of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States as a comprehensive framework with great potential for the region, and noted the efforts under way for its implementation, but that much remains unaddressed. It is believed that the special session of the General Assembly in 1999 to review the Plan of Action will represent an important opportunity for the region. Support was expressed for national, regional and transregional activities in the run-up to the special session, both to better position ourselves for effective participation and to raise pre-sessional awareness of the situation of small island developing States.

One issue that received a great deal of attention at this year's Forum summit was that of global climate change, and in particular the risk of sea level rise brought on or hastened by human activities affecting the atmosphere. The Forum's membership includes two annex I parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. All the rest, including several which are not United Nations Members, are small island developing countries and committed members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). We are driven in that regard by deep concerns about our very survival.

It was encouraging and perhaps indicative to others that despite a wide diversity of interests on this issue the Forum succeeded in reaching a comprehensive position. The Forum recognized the legally binding commitments agreed to in the Kyoto Protocol as a significant first step forward on the path of ensuring effective global action to combat climate change. The Forum encouraged all countries to sign the Kyoto Protocol and to work towards its earliest possible ratification. In particular, noting that the Framework Convention obliges developed country parties to take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof, the Forum stressed the importance of implementing measures to ensure early progress towards meeting the commitments in the Kyoto

Protocol. This applies particularly to the United States, the European Union, the Russian Federation, Japan, Canada and other annex I emitters.

The Forum called for substantial progress at the upcoming fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention in Buenos Aires in establishing the rules for international implementation mechanisms — particularly emissions trading, the clean development mechanism and joint implementation — to ensure that these mechanisms assist the effectiveness of greenhouse-gas reduction efforts.

It was also noted that an effective global response to the problem of climate change will require ongoing active cooperation and strengthened action by all parties, taking account of their common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capabilities. The Forum stressed the urgent need to initiate a process to develop procedures and future time-frames for wider global participation in emissions limitation and reduction in which significant developing country emitters would enter into commitments which reflect their individual national circumstances and development needs. But remember, developed countries must take the lead.

The Forum noted with relief and gratitude the recognition in the Kyoto Protocol of the importance of the adaption needs of small island States. The leaders called for adequate resources to be generated through the implementation mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol and the Global Environment Facility for the full range of adaption measures. The Forum countries anticipate maximizing the benefits to them from such implementation measures and mechanisms through the work of another regional organization, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

Respectful of the wide range of reactions and emotions surrounding the outcome of Kyoto, and recognizing also the difficult challenges that will face the delegates at Buenos Aires, it is suggested that the Forum consensus should be taken as a harbinger of the possibilities for finding common ground on a larger playing field — one on which the ultimate fate of all of us may be decided.

Before I leave the subject of climate change, I would like to express gratitude to the donor nations that responded recently to the suffering visited upon Pacific island peoples by the climatic phenomenon of El Niño. Whether or not scientists can decide conclusively that the recent intensity of the El Niño effect is a symptom of global climate change, it is a fact that entire island populations found themselves in a situation where their very survival depended on the willingness of other countries to provide emergency assistance. We will always be thankful that such assistance was forthcoming.

While we express our appreciation, we are also mindful of the situation of the devastation that has been created by Hurricane Georges in the southern United States, and we are hoping and praying that this phenomenon will pass, giving relief to the people.

Another issue of immediate and continuing environmental concern to our Forum region is the ongoing practice by industrialized Powers of shipping radioactive wastes back and forth through our economic zones in the advancement of their own national interests and priorities, irrespective of our strenuous and continuing protests. The Forum noted that some strides have been made in exchanging information on these shipments, but the risks remain. At the very minimum, we continue to seek a strong regime of prior notification to and consultation with coastal States on planned shipments of hazardous wastes, and the development of a regime to compensate the region for actual economic losses caused to tourism, fisheries and other affected industries in the area.

The Forum leaders could not help but note with alarm the recent tests of nuclear devices by India and Pakistan. They expressed grave concern that the recent nuclear tests constitute a threat to the international process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It will be recalled that the region encompassed by the Forum members has perhaps greater standing than any other region in the world to express alarm over the continued testing of nuclear devices. The Forum members have endured and continue to endure the human suffering that has resulted from the curse of nuclear proliferation and testing. The Pacific island countries are taking action within the region to counter the presence of nuclear weapons and the testing of nuclear devices through the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. We call upon the United States to ratify that Treaty.

Finally, as regards the South Pacific Forum — and I stress that I do not mention here every issue that was discussed or covered in the communiqué — I want to relate the Forum's pleasure in drawing attention to the signing of the Noumea Accord between the Government

of France and the concerned parties in New Caledonia. This Accord represents a tremendous accomplishment by all involved in moving forward the process of self-determination for New Caledonia, whatever the ultimate outcome of that process might be.

I have already consumed much of my time in commenting on issues that concern the South Pacific Forum as a group. Briefly now, I ask that you focus your attention on the situation of my small island developing country.

The Federated States of Micronesia is approaching the end of the millennium with a sense of unsettlement. We will be among the first to celebrate the beginning of the new epoch, but, in an immediate sense, what does this celebration promise for us? Our developmental process began only a few years ago, and the barriers we face in terms of need for technology and manpower development, scarcity of resources, our remote location and small population — to name only a few — are beyond our capability to overcome alone.

We are indeed fortunate to be receiving substantial assistance from the United States and other bilateral partners, but our long-term future cannot and should not depend upon bilateral assistance. Perhaps it is not realistic for us to plan for complete self-sufficiency, but we do want to become, and we must become, more self-reliant.

We in the Federated States of Micronesia have some concerns that the emphasis of effort in the United Nations is being somewhat drawn away from the balance between addressing the overall interests of all countries and at the same time particularly assisting developing countries to move towards their rightful condition. In other words, we fear that the traditional role of the Organization in assisting less advanced countries with their development could be marginalized. I use the phrase "drawn away" because the shift to which I refer would not be something that leaders sat down and purposefully decided on. In large part, given the breadth of the Charter, the United Nations is simply in danger of becoming overwhelmed by its responsibilities. As regional and national conflicts proliferate, drug trafficking flourishes, terrorism looms as an ever more dangerous part of our daily lives, and as the global environment becomes increasingly threatened, the demands on the time and resources of this body and its Members to confront immediate problems are compelling.

But while the need to move towards a closer parity between the living standards of the North and the South necessitates long-term solutions, it cannot be forgotten that in the long term the accomplishment of that goal will do much to address the problems to which I have just referred, which seem beyond the reach of immediate solutions.

Meanwhile, as developing countries, we too must do our part. We must create the flexible, though outward-oriented, economies that can maximize the benefits of the global economy in which we also exist. At the same time, we must not forget that our national identities and unique national and subnational social, political and economic situations demand a proactive approach that avoids blindly jumping on the bandwagon of the latest development initiatives in order to reap the perceived benefits of donor assistance. In realizing that mistakes inevitably are made and opportunities lost, we must not lose our sense of self-confidence or permit ourselves to become overly prone to accepting the dictates of well-meaning donor partners whose understanding of our situation may not be complete.

But we must also remain very alert to the need for course correction and we must endure periods of structural, institutional and even behavioural change. The process is now ongoing in my country. With the assistance of the Asian Development Bank and donor partners, we are well along in implementing a two-pronged programme that involves Government and public enterprise reforms, on the one hand, and private sector reforms, on the other. On the Government side, we are reorganizing and downsizing our institutions and improving our tax structure in order to move along the adjustment path to sustainable finances and rational service levels. On the private sector side, our reforms are designed to improve the economic environment for private sector growth, especially in those productive activities that earn dollars from abroad. This means, among other things, reducing the role of Government in productive activities and restructuring our legal and regulatory environment to encourage private sector activity and investment, especially foreign investment.

Despite our determination to carry through this effort, we know that it alone will not produce development. It will facilitate development and make our application of development assistance far more effective. But now, perhaps more than ever, we will require the patience, understanding and continued support of donor partners and international institutions, which have been so instrumental in helping us to reach this point.

This is to be a session during which two very important anniversaries are celebrated: 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping and 50 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As to the first, I wish to honour those who served in the peacekeeping operations of the past 50 years, especially those who lost their lives in the service of the United Nations. As to the second, the vital role played by the Declaration hardly needs my endorsement; but I would refer to my statement at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, when, in speaking with respect to those who have given their lives in the cause of human rights, I said:

> "Those very heroes would be among the first to say, 'Let's look into the past only for what we can learn from it. The job is not yet done, and our enemy grows stronger.'"

It only remains for me to refer to the activities of the international community and this body having to do with my country's predominant resource — the ocean. This is the International Year of the Ocean. The world can little afford to miss the opportunities presented by this occasion to focus on our planet's most prevalent yet least understood physical mechanism. The single best example of that dangerously incomplete understanding surely is the ocean-generated, worldwide disaster of El Niño, which occurred, ironically, this year.

For obvious reasons, the peoples of Micronesia secured involvement in the long negotiations that led to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea even before we emerged from Trusteeship status. We have continued that involvement as a party to the Convention and now call on all States to ratify the Convention and participate fully in the process. We support the Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, as well as resolutions aimed at eradicating the practice of driftnet fishing and unauthorized fishing in areas of national jurisdiction. We urge action to reduce by-catches, fish discards and post-harvest losses.

Looking towards the Assembly's special session on the Barbados Programme of Action, and also towards next year's consideration of oceans by the Commission on Sustainable Development, we encourage the recognition of linkages between the various related issues and the need for more integrated treatment. By necessity, I speak of linkages and integration, which are familiar terms of usage within the United Nations system but there is nothing routine about the devastations of El Niño that were visited upon my country's people earlier this year and upon other peoples around the world. I can think of no better example of the need for the recognition of linkages in terms of ocean and climatic issues and the necessity for the application of integrated response measures.

In closing, I should like to refer to the fact that, in recent years, as the problems of our increasingly complex and globalized society appear to have escalated, it has become fashionable in some quarters to question whether the United Nations Organization is worth maintaining. It is as though the world's peoples expect that the worth of this Organization is to be tested by its efficiency in "fixing" a set of global problems, after which, presumably, we would all live happily ever after. That mistaken notion is grounded in the assumption that international cooperation exists only for immediate problem-solving.

Speaking for a relatively new Member country of the United Nations, allow me to suggest humbly that the repetition of mistakes of whatever scale and the creation of new crises along with every step forward is elemental to the human condition. The Charter of this Organization, monumental as it may be, is still a document designed by and for human beings on this planet and must be judged and applied in light of the human experience. The United Nations should not be expected to work itself out of a job.

The people and the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia deeply respect the past accomplishments of the United Nations and look forward to continuing to meet our commitments to it, even though our contributions may appear small.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jacob Nena, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facusée, Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facusée, Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facusée, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Flores Facusée (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am pleased and honoured to convey a cordial and respectful greeting from the people and Government of the Republic of Honduras and from the other countries that are members of the Central American Integration System, of which I am proud to be the current Chairman.

Mr. President, Central America wishes to express its satisfaction at your well-deserved election to preside over this fifty-third regular session of the General Assembly. Your outstanding professional and public career is a guarantee that this session of the Assembly will yield fruitful and significant results.

Our delegation wishes also to express its gratitude to the representative of the Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for the commendable work he did during the last General Assembly. We also express our sincerest gratitude to Mr. Kofi Annan, who, in discharging his mandate as Secretary-General of our Organization, has displayed a spirit of hard work and dedication in a particularly difficult period for the United Nations.

Throughout its history, Honduras has fought for the system of democratic government to take root on its soil. It has fought to take its place in the world community as a fully fledged State, to imbue its independent, republican character with respect for basic human rights, and to ensure public freedoms for all of its inhabitants. However, many of those efforts were frustrated at certain regrettable times in our past, a past that was closely interlinked with that of the other States of the Central American region. Fortunately, in recent decades Honduras has safeguarded and strengthened its democracy and its internal institutions, in spite of the deplorable and difficult circumstances experienced by the Central American region as the involuntary theatre of the cold war, which was imposed on us from outside, and in spite of the undesirable consequences of armed conflicts.

The Governments of Central America are currently working hard to consolidate peace and a spirit of internal reconciliation in our societies. Our resolve is strong in this process, and the progress achieved is truly encouraging and a just reward for these efforts. We are determined to turn away forever from the fratricidal battles that have caused us so much suffering and diverted our energy from the construction of the prosperous, democratic, free and happy region that our peoples yearn for and that their democratic Governments strive to offer.

It must be said that although Honduras was not the direct scene of Central American armed conflicts, it did suffer the grave consequences of the instability, uncertainty and violence of the region, which caused thousands of Hondurans to emigrate to other countries, mainly to the United States. Unfortunately, justice has not been done to our compatriots, as they have not been given the same opportunities and immigration status enjoyed by other Central Americans. We trust that the sacrifice of Honduras in the Central American conflicts of the past will be fully understood and that our emigrants will be given the consideration that they justly deserve.

Furthermore, the Presidents of Central America, in ongoing consultations and regular meetings, are giving strong impetus to regional integration in all fields: economic, political, social and cultural. These dynamics of integration include the States of Belize, Panama and the Dominican Republic, through broad participation mechanisms and the signing of economic treaties and of bilateral and multinational exchanges. We are hoping also for a joint venture with the Mexican Republic, and we maintain that the region as a whole must enjoy the same benefits that the three principal North American countries have already agreed upon for themselves.

The Government of Honduras commends the Secretary-General of the United Nations and fully supports his efforts to reform the Organization. There is consensus in Central America on the fact that United Nations reform, including broader membership of the Security Council, is a necessity for the international system. But this expansion must be based upon equitable geographic representation and the consensus of the regional groups and the existing subregional mechanisms. The restructuring must also include a procedural review in order to ensure greater representation, transparency and efficiency.

The Government of Honduras supports the initiative of the President of the United States to establish a worldwide organization to fight against terrorism. We strongly condemn all types of terrorism without exception because we believe it is a form of human cruelty that no political, ideological, religious or cultural cause can justify at this stage of our civilization.

On the subject of controlling illegal drug trafficking, our Government reiterates its support for the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem. Because of its strategic geographic position, Central America is in danger of becoming a production and trade area for narcotic drugs and must therefore receive the greatest possible international support to fight this scourge.

We are pleased also at the advances achieved by the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, held in Rome, whose goal was to create a legal forum with global jurisdiction in order to bring to trial and convict individuals for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Honduran people themselves have suffered from the use of anti-personnel mines, which have taken a high toll in human lives. Consequently, we are prepared to support the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The Government of Honduras is proud to announce that today it has deposited with the Secretary-General its instrument of ratification of the landmines Convention.

The countries of the Central American Region view with concern and deplore the recent nuclear tests conducted in other geographical regions, and we advocate the introduction and full implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as an important step towards the total elimination of these devastating weapons.

Honduras supports the efforts of the Republic of China on Taiwan for full membership in the United Nations and in the international agencies of the United Nations system. We are convinced that conditions have changed significantly and that at this time in our history there can be no justification for the international isolation to which more than 21 million people are subjected.

Among other noteworthy issues is the advancement of women in society. We welcome this advancement not only because women have the right to equality, but also because with their help we can envision a fairer and more humane world. We invite States to support the Platform for Action in the effective implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Likewise, because children and adolescents are the most vulnerable members of society, we are prepared to lend our vigorous support to the convening of a world conference of ministers responsible for youth, with a view to the implementation of national programmes and of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and in order to support the institutions and programmes designed to safeguard our children and young people as the generational and spiritual reserve of our homeland.

Globalization is a subject of particular concern that must be tackled in this unique forum — so vital to humankind — because it gives rise to challenges of an unprecedented magnitude.

It is true that humankind has always faced singular challenges throughout the millennium that is now drawing to a close. Major worldwide events have occurred that have drastically changed the way of life of millions of people: the Christian revolution, in the spiritual realm; the liberal revolutions of France and the United States, in the political realm; the Industrial Revolution, in the economic realm; and the Russian Revolution, in the social realm. Each of these historic events affected in a different way humankind's self-image and the role of States in governing society.

Thus, the twentieth century — which saw great achievements, serious errors, titanic efforts, enormous upheavals and profuse bloodshed — is now drawing to a close. We are about to open a new chapter for humankind, one that is replete with uncertainty, expectations, fears and hopes — the first century of the approaching third millennium.

The twentieth century will bequeath to future generations a legacy without parallel or comparison in the history of human development. This is the century that took us to the very depth of the microcosmos through the splitting of the atom and the deciphering of the genetic code, allowing us to unravel the components of matter and discover and use an impressive number of new and even-made elements with the help of innovative formulas for nuclear energy, light, heat and sound. It has been a century of great discoveries in all the sciences — mathematics, physics, medicine, chemistry, optics, genetics, psychology and electronics.

This is the century of the outer space and man's daring probes and adventures of man beyond his planet. This is the century of vertiginous speeds that broke the sound barrier and of communications and transport that have, indeed, transformed the earth into a global village. It is the century of universal cybernetic information, which has connected man with his neighbour in the other hemisphere, just as two friends used to talk in their back yards, separated only by a garden fence. Today, the computer performs tasks that would have taken the most cultivated and talented man centuries of work, or that he would have never been able to perform. Races and cultures have been mixed, influencing each other in an unceasing exchange of creations. There has been a massive spreading of ideas, news, customs and new developments such as man never dreamed of accomplishing in the course of his long and trying existence on earth. This is the century of geopolitical changes, as sudden as they are unimaginable, so huge that their very force left their own protagonists behind.

Unfortunately, it is also a century that will be remembered with sadness, as the century of the two great worldwide slaughters and many dreadful, apparently local and centralized, wars. It is the century of thermonuclear, toxic and chemical weapons and other means of mass destruction. It is the century of merciless, senseless terrorism, and also the century of the terrible AIDS pandemic. It is the century, finally, of man's greatest destruction of the ecology and of the purity of his environment, seriously threatening the very existence of his planet. We are concerned, and we are surely ashamed, that this century will also be remembered as the century of the direst poverty in an alarming majority of countries. We are grieved that when there is prosperity, it is concentrated among the richest, but when there is a crisis, on the other hand, its devastation is brought down on the poorest.

But if there is one issue that characterizes this century and for ever marks it in the annals of the human race, it is the desire for, the necessity of and the value of freedom. Never have we fought so hard and paid such a high price for freedom, or for the lack thereof, as we have done in this century. Never have there been so many attempts to destroy freedom through systems, ideologies, regimes and wars, and never has man carried out such monumental exploits, such beautiful and heroic deeds, in the defence or pursuit of liberty, as in the last 10 decades of this millennium. The great figures that left their mark on contemporary history are those who denied freedom to their nations or achieved it gloriously, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

Thank God that we can say at this time, and in this world forum, that freedom has triumphed and will continue to establish itself in every corner of the world where it is still denied or crushed, whenever conditions show our peoples that freedom, an essential human value, is worth the trouble and that to fight for it and to keep it are important for man's physical and spiritual well-being.

Along with freedom, democracy is triumphing around the globe, but for this progress to continue to be effective and to last, so that we do not lose what we have gained and do not return to the tyrannies we defeated with so much effort and suffering, certain conditions must be fulfilled. This is the huge challenge of the next millennium: how to keep this freedom, how to extend it to the farthest corner of the planet and — the final test — how to manage it for the benefit of all humankind.

It is true that, just as there are hopeful and encouraging expectations on which we must capitalize, there is also a lot of worry, and even fear, in our nations concerning these swift, radical and dizzying universal changes. The world economy has progressed and developed dramatically in the last 25 years. Economic globalization has opened up opportunities and risks for all the countries of the world. However, at this time it is quite clear that the benefits of globalization are not shared by all countries and that, in many cases, there is an increasing disparity between developed and developing countries, an inequality that produces social and political tensions in our countries and severely threatens the democratic advances for which we have paid so dearly.

In the beginning of the process of global liberalization, it was maintained that the reduction in the flows of assistance for development would be far outweighed by the commercial benefits and private capital flows to our regions. The truth is that, even though we support commercial liberalization with concrete measures, our products have often been faced with various kinds of barriers that are hard to overcome.

In combination, factors such as the reduction in development assistance, barriers to the export of our products, the scanty movement of private capital or its excessive concentration in certain areas, and the burden of foreign debt become formidable obstacles to the economic growth and social development of our peoples. I believe the time is ripe to evaluate what is happening at the global level in order to take measures that will prevent further deterioration of the living conditions of

our population and promote a more just economic and social order.

This concern is especially legitimate in the light of financial developments in recent days in certain countries of South-East Asia and Japan. Those economies and systems were held up to us as an example to follow and as a standard for what can be achieved with full economic liberalization. Russia followed that path that led to the crisis affecting us today, which we all hope is temporary. All of this means that the economy is not everything, and that a setback in maintaining the welfare level of a people's well-being because of economic and financial mechanisms can rapidly deteriorate its political and social conditions, presenting the imminent danger of moving backwards in the development of democracy and imperilling once again the precious gift of freedom, for which millions of men and women have given their lives in this century. Creating great expectations and exaggerated hopes of well-being and development is dangerous, as are the disappointments that can be felt by our peoples when the democratic system and the new economic order are incapable of giving concrete answers to the basic needs of our nations. This is the risk of backlash, the reversal of conquests and the return to instability, rivalry, mistrust and the loss of internal, and even international, peace.

Under the pressure of globalization, modernization and economic adjustments, we have surely put at stake millions of the planet's inhabitants' right to better life especially in Latin America. At stake is the national identity of countries and the identity of regions faced with an increasingly rapid process of universalization and assimilation, which is not always laudable. At stake is the vulnerability or resistance of our societies before the avalanche of influences, requirements and models imposed from the outside, behind the mask of structural adjustments and modernization. At stake is stability: we are faced with the massive development of violent, or simply rebellious, acts of the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, because they feel powerless before the walls that prevent their access to survival, work, education, health and safety, which are essential, basic rights, amply consecrated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we Hondurans have celebrated with the greatest pleasure and with renewed hope that such principles can actually lead us to fairer, happier societies.

We cannot hide the fear, shared by many of the Governments represented here, that a new economic order that is unfair, oversized and all-encompassing, and that does not take into consideration the political and social realities of each country and the processes that led us to these vertiginous changes, would destroy any possibility for the equitable development of each person and each people, to the extent that globalization generates excessive concentrations of power in large and monstrous consortiums, instead of solidarity in the enjoyment of the goods and opportunities afforded by a new, universal society.

Whether we are moving towards an ideal, globalized, fraternal and peaceful world of solidarity, or towards other forms of tyranny, submission and cruelty — this is the question we must ask, all of us who have public responsibilities in Honduras and in every corner of the planet. In a world where the borders no longer divide countries, but rather swell to embrace the geographic contours of the planet, in a world in which the scope of international relations is limited only by human ambition and imagination, the question is whether we are heading for the globalization of ethics or an ethics of globalization. This question must be answered if we are to avoid the death, in the vortex of capital and market growth, of humankind's ethical and moral values, which have been the pillars that prevent the crumbling of what we all call civilization.

At issue, in short, is the ability to govern societies, but without losing the freedoms that gave birth to States, and without losing the ethical values that have kept them alive, sheltered by eternal concepts such as national sovereignty, basic human rights, the survival of the planet and the self-determination of peoples.

After all, in the hierarchy of the values that define our highest aspirations, the supreme goal of society and State continues to be the human person, and the supreme good we are trying to achieve is not growth, not development, not globalization, but happiness and well-being.

This is the right time, then, to seek alternatives such as the needed reinforcement of multilateral institutions with funds on preferential terms to support development; increased cooperation in order to foster better opportunities for those most in need and to reduce imbalances and close the distance between the richest and the poorest; the governing of globalization so that it does not demand sacrifices from most nations while concentrating its benefits in a few; and the search for additional, expeditious mechanisms to reduce the foreign debt that is choking most of humankind. The United Nations must become the appropriate forum to foster

these and other initiatives required to guarantee better conditions for developing countries, intelligent measures to ensure universal peace and harmony.

Honduras, its people and its Government, declare their faith in the superior qualities of man and his capacity for hope and faith in a better destiny for all humankind. We are sure that the unity of all the peoples of the earth around the essential topics of peace, survival of the planet, a worldwide economic system that is more balanced and really open to all and the construction of societies that are fairer, freer, and safer will remain the *raison d'être* of the United Nations and its most important task. In this effort, the Organization can count on the support and solidarity of Honduras and other Central American States.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facusée, Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rafael Caldera, President of the Republic of Venezuela

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Rafael Caldera, President of the Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Venezuela, His Excellency Mr. Rafael Caldera, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Caldera (*interpretation from Spanish*): Please accept my sincere congratulations, Sir, on your election. I am convinced that your solid academic background and valuable experience as a statesman will serve your country, Uruguay, well, and will strengthen Latin America's image.

I also congratulate the Secretary-General on the excellent report he submitted to the General Assembly at this fifty-third session. It is a document rich in profound analysis and noteworthy proposals for these new times.

I am speaking on behalf of Venezuela before the General Assembly of the United Nations at a time when my Government's term is drawing to a close, in just a few months. Venezuela's words are candid and sincere, for we are ever at the ready to make our modest but solid contribution to the establishment of stable friendship and an effective and durable peace among all the peoples of the world.

The century that is drawing to a close has left a deep imprint on human history. Two gigantic wars nearly put an end to our civilization's impressive progress and, above all, to the respect for human rights that is fundamental to all progress. An unparalleled revolution seemed destined to change decisively the face and destiny of the world, and the end of that revolution was the most striking and fortunate surprise the world has ever seen.

The world war that started in 1914 revealed to the horror-stricken eyes of the world the human capacity for evil and destruction. But it was followed by two decades of lavishness and squandering that made people forget the root causes of the conflagration. The attempt to create a League of Nations awakened ideals and showed the way, but it disintegrated when the thunder of cannons announced the outbreak of the Second World War. The subsequent post-war era, enriched by the bitter lessons of experience, encouraged by suffering and inspired by the ideals of peace and liberty, lived for five decades under the threat of nuclear war. The terrible catastrophe predicted as the inevitable result of the so-called cold war remained at the forefront of the world's concerns until the memorable fall of the Berlin Wall, which opened the new era in which humanity now finds itself.

For half a century peacekeeping has been a difficult and sometimes agonizing task. Faith in ideals was not enough to resolve the problems; what was needed was the will and firm purpose, illuminated by experience.

The United Nations has undoubtedly played a very important role in this peacekeeping task, despite all the deficiencies and errors it could be accused of. It has been the irreplaceable forum where all countries could talk to each other, where all ideologies, all ethnic groups, all political systems, could meet, without losing sight of the goal of encouraging and fostering freedom everywhere and of practising and promoting, by all legal means possible, the democratic system, the only system that is

truly compatible with respect for human rights and the free competition of all to govern. The Organization has managed to keep its respected position, and today we hope to be able to strengthen it further so as to work firmly together to confront the new problems and realities, something that will require ever greater efforts.

The century that is coming to an end has also been a time of incredible transformations. Air travel, which had been the dream of a few visionaries, has become an everyday reality, and each hour thousands of people fly in and out of airports around the globe. The great adventure of space exploration has now left progress in air travel behind, starting with man's travels to the moon.

The very nature of the planet we live on has been the object of comparisons that take us across infinite distances in our thoughts about the basic nature of the universe. The position of our solar system and the global unity we live in, in relation to the whole cosmos, is a subject we are trying more and more to define and penetrate.

Furthermore, in just a few short years, compared with the span of history, the communications revolution has made the world more unified, more interdependent, more in need of standards and systems that cannot be imposed by the most powerful, but must be the result of consensus, with respect for each individual's identity and right to life.

In today's society we are fully conscious of the infinite presence of what is large, but we also have a precise idea of the importance of what is infinitely small. The technological revolution has not left an iota of knowledge untouched by its transforming impact. And those who cultivate thought, pure science and art laboriously search for new avenues, driven by a zeal that arises from the progress already achieved in changing mankind's way of life.

We strongly favour the Secretary-General's plans for reform of the Organization. We are convinced that the Security Council must be enlarged. The establishment of the International Criminal Court represents an important step in the juridical life of the international community. The fight against drug trafficking and terrorism increasingly requires that the international community become its centre of coordination. These are delicate and demanding problems that cannot be left to the individual actions of States, however powerful. The international community therefore faces an arduous task.

The fight against poverty has been one of the most important aspects of international action in the last few years. The World Summit for Social Development reflected one of the priority concerns of the United Nations. The ongoing activities of specialized agencies and the projects of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mark out a clear path in the search for a solution to this problem, a path that must be extended over the whole surface of the Earth. We know full well that peace, true peace, stable and permanent peace, requires justice, and that justice is most truly expressed in social justice. This was recognized by the victorious countries in the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War, and it was also expressed in the Declaration of Philadelphia of 1944 by the belligerents about to triumph in the Second World War. The fight against poverty is ever more necessary and urgent, for the market economy and the current globalization process cannot on their own respond to the demands that social problems make on world leaders.

In addition to its positive aspects and the progress it undeniably entails, the complex phenomenon we have come to call globalization can also have progressively negative effects on the emerging developing countries. Faced with the world's present imbalance, we must therefore make a special point of emphasizing the harmful effects of international financial speculation. The balance of terror imposed by the cold war has been replaced by a lack of financial discipline, by ruthless speculation that is alien to the values of solidarity and ethics that should prevail even in technology's most sophisticated advances. The poorest countries are the traumatized victims of this reality, but the whole world community may be threatened by this situation that will affect even the advanced countries. No one can escape the consequences of this situation. I therefore believe that today's international agenda must concentrate on this critical point, giving it priority over other objectives that, though also important, must give way to this indispensable matter.

My country's delegation to the United Nations has set forth, first to the Group of 77 and then to the General Assembly, the need to call a special meeting to study the financing of developing countries. If financial assistance to the developing countries is not addressed on a priority basis, if the necessary resources are not forthcoming from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as other agencies dealing with the basic aims of development, globalization will not be as successful as we could hope it to be.

The effects of the Asian crisis on Latin America have resulted in the weakening of some currencies, a significant downturn in the capital markets, rising internal interest rates, restrictions to the obtention of external credits and a rapid increase in the risk factors for many emerging countries.

The visible effects of the phenomenon of globalization have demonstrated the imperfections of the international financial and monetary system, which has recently been characterized by, *inter alia*, the sharp impact of the participation of powerful financial groups and the decisive actions of certain parties, such as the agencies that assess risk, certain of which have become a worse threat than the terrible forces of other times. The time is ripe to encourage a better understanding between developed and developing countries, all equally affected by financial instability. Venezuela believes that financial and monetary issues must have a permanent place on the agenda of the United Nations system. To that end, the exchange of ideas between the Organization and the international financial institutions that make up the Bretton Woods system must be encouraged and strengthened.

Fundamentally, globalization will depend on the balance between rich and poor, between the more advanced, the intermediately advanced and the least developed nations, and on the application of equitable formulas to alleviate the external debt burden referred to by the Secretary-General in his report.

At the end of the twentieth century, there is no more important objective than to steer the concern of the international community in this direction. If measures are not taken to put an end to the abuses of what His Holiness John Paul II called savage capitalism, which gives rise, with its excessive desire for profit, to unstable situations that are transmitted with vertiginous speed to all the world's economic centres, we will have replaced the fear of nuclear war with the threat of an economic and social catastrophe.

It is my view that in today's globalized world, one of the primary commitments of the community of nations, working through and coordinated by the United Nations, is to strengthen its resolve to prevent and correct unacceptable imbalances, and to ensure the awareness and capacity of the international financial mechanisms for facing contingencies.

In a few weeks, the people of Venezuela will go to the polls to elect their new leaders. For 40 consecutive years, at each constitutionally determined interval, the transfer of power stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic has been carried out. In shifting circumstances, the institution of democracy has remained stable in an atmosphere of full and absolute freedom. A difficult economic situation and the winds of change that are blowing throughout the world and are becoming stronger on the eve of a new millennium have focused Venezuela's political debate on the idea of change. I am nevertheless convinced that, despite the change Venezuela envisages, its people's love for liberty and democracy as the best system of government and its commitment to fight for peace and understanding among all nations will remain unaltered.

May I remind the Assembly that, although our fight for political independence was perhaps the bloodiest of the nineteenth century, we have not had a single violent conflict with any other country since the birth of our Republic. In international forums, Venezuela has distinguished itself by its constant support for universal peace and has always made its modest contribution to any initiative in favour of justice and peace. That is why I can assure the Assembly that the next Government of Venezuela, whatever the electorate may decide, will continue to follow the same path within the United Nations. The Organization can rely on Venezuela for anything relating to service to any and all human beings, or to friendship, cooperation and peace among nations, and anything required by the fight against crime, poverty, drug-trafficking, terrorism, hatred, discrimination -- all the evils that have beset humanity. We trust that the United Nations will always stand against those evils as a shield against adversity and a beacon of hope.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Venezuela for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rafael Caldera, President of the Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, Construction and Religious Affairs of the State of Israel

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, Construction and Religious Affairs of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, Construction and Religious Affairs of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, Construction and Religious Affairs of the State of Israel, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): As the Prime Minister of Israel, I represent a State whose creation was envisioned, encouraged and advocated by the League of Nations 80 years ago and by the United Nations 50 years ago. That extraordinary recognition by the international community confirmed what the Jewish people have known and felt for two millennia: the bond between the people of Israel and the land of Israel is eternal, and the rebirth of the Jewish State in the land of Israel is a historic imperative.

Religious and non-religious people alike have viewed this rebirth as a modern miracle, the realization of the vision of the Hebrew prophets. Yet ever since that miracle occurred, we have all been hoping that it would be accompanied by the fulfilment of another biblical prophesy:

> "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4*)

It was in fact in that spirit that the founders of Israel stretched out the hand of peace to our neighbours in our Declaration of Independence some 50 years ago. Now, half a century later, as we view with pride our nation's extraordinary accomplishments and achievements, we are determined to complete the circle of peace around us. No people have suffered more from war and violence than the Jewish people and no one wants peace more than we do. I know that that is not a common perception of us. I, personally, am often accused of not wanting peace. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have been on the fields of battle. I have seen my comrades fall. I have two small children at home. I want a future free of war — a future of peace, for them and for Palestinian children like them.

We want peace for us and for the Palestinian people, whose prolonged suffering has been one of the cruel consequences of the wars waged against us. We are willing to make painful compromises for peace. We hope that the Palestinians are ready to make those necessary compromises as well. What is at stake is our life together in a very small land, and there is no reason that we should not be able to live together. All of us are, after all, the sons and daughters of Abraham.

As we search for peace, we naturally encounter crises and stalemates, frustrations and obstacles — that is inevitable in any negotiating process. But only negotiations can solve our problems. An outcome which is not the result of negotiations is an invitation to continued conflict. Negotiations accompanied by violence and threats of violence are an invitation to failure. The option of violence must therefore be totally discarded and permanently disavowed.

Peace will be achieved only by heeding the call made by two great leaders, the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israel's former Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Twenty-one years ago they declared in Jerusalem, "No more war. No more bloodshed."

The Treaty they hammered out at Camp David was a historic turning point which changed the face of our region. It has benefited both countries and brought hope to all of us, as has the peace with Jordan, which is a model peace for all our neighbours. King Hussein's contribution to this peace, his devotion to the advancement of our relationship and his efforts to help the peace process with the Palestinians have been invaluable. In the name of the people of Israel and, I am sure, on behalf of all the peoples and Governments represented in the Assembly, I want to send King Hussein our most heartfelt wishes for a quick and complete recovery.

I believe we can achieve a successful peace agreement with the Palestinians as well. But for that peace to endure, it must be based on two principles. The first is security. A peace that cannot be defended will not last. That is the central lesson of the twentieth century.

None of us can afford to forget this lesson, least of all the Jewish people. As the Prime Minister of the one Jewish State, I must ensure Israel's ability to defend itself, regardless of criticism and misunderstanding by those who do not share this responsibility.

The second principle of a durable peace is reciprocity. Only agreements honoured by both sides can be successful. The agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is at bottom based on a simple equation: the Palestinians receive jurisdiction in the territory in which they live, and in return they prevent terrorist attacks against Israel from those territories. Israel has been fulfilling its part of this agreement: 100 per cent of the Palestinians in the Gaza district and 98 per cent of the Palestinians in Judean Samaria, known as the West Bank, are now living under Palestinian rule. They enjoy the attributes of self-government: they have their own flag, their own executive, legislative and judiciary bodies and their own police force.

It can no longer be claimed by anyone that Israel is occupying the Palestinians. We do not govern their lives. But we cannot accept a situation in which they will threaten our lives, and that is of paramount concern to us as we approach further redeployment.

The territory we are negotiating about is virtually uninhabited by Palestinians — there are only a few thousand Bedouins there who roam about. Yet this land is the canvas on which thousands of years of Jewish history have been etched. And it has powerful implications for our security. We should remember that at its widest point Israel is all of 50 miles wide, and should it cede all of the West Bank, as some so cavalierly tell us to do, that distance would be reduced to the distance between this building and La Guardia airport. How many Governments and leaders would put their nations at such risk? None. Yet we are prepared to undertake careful, controlled and calculated risks for peace. Nevertheless, to part with one square inch of this land is agonizing for us, and for me personally. Every stone and every hill and valley that I have walked — I know them intimately, as do my people — resonates with our forefathers' footsteps, from the cradle of Jewish civilization through the biblical kings and prophets and the sages, scholars and poets of Israel, down to our own time.

Yet in the spirit of compromise and reconciliation we have agreed to transfer to Palestinian jurisdiction some of this hallowed land, provided that the principles of security and reciprocity are kept. This means that Israel would retain the ability to defend itself, and that the Palestinians would fulfil their commitments, first and foremost to shun violence and fight terrorism.

Under the Oslo and Hebron agreements, which I signed, the Palestinian Authority and Chairman Arafat agreed to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and arrest and prosecute terrorist operatives. They agreed to collect and dispose of illegal weapons, imprison and hand over wanted murderers and reduce the Palestinian police to the numbers prescribed in the Oslo agreements. That has not been done to date. They also agreed to cease the vicious daily propaganda on official Palestinian television; there are *Sesame Street* programmes which exhort five-year olds to become suicide warriors. This, I am afraid, is education for war, not for peace. And they agreed that they must complete the annulment of the Palestinian Charter, which can only be done by the Palestinian National Council. That Charter is still on the books and still on the Internet — if representatives turn it on they can find it. It still calls for Israel's destruction thorough armed struggle, which is a euphemism for terrorism. So I say today to our Palestinian partners "Choose peace. Fight for peace. You cannot talk peace and tolerate terrorism".

Of course, terrorism endangers our peace, but it is also a global cancer. Many leaders today understand this, as President Clinton made abundantly clear from this very podium a few days ago. But what makes the terrorism rooted in the Middle East so pernicious and so dangerous is that the terrorists invoke a distorted, twisted and fanatic interpretation of Islam, which is very distant from enlightened Islam. We have no quarrel with Islam. It is one of the world's great religions, and we have admiration and respect for its institutions and its teachings. But fanatic Islamist terrorism is religion betrayed, and it not only threatens us but undermines Arab Governments and societies. It endangers the peace of the world.

For terrorism to be defeated, terrorists must be punished and deterred, and the climate of support they enjoy in various lands must disappear. That is the only way that terrorism will decline and its growth be arrested and that it will ultimately be rooted out from our lives.

The elimination of terrorism will undoubtedly lead to prosperity in our region. We envision a market-based regional economy between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. As I speak we are lifting the barriers to trade, eliminating red tape and promoting joint business ventures between the parties. Trade between

Israel and the Palestinians has shot up enormously in the last two years because our policy is a liberal policy. If things are better for them economically, things are better for us. I should like to give an example relating to the transfer of value added tax (VAT) from Palestinian workers working in Israel, whose numbers have grown enormously in the last two years. Three years ago we transferred about 700 million shekels to the Palestinian Authority from the work of Palestinian workers in Israel. This year that figure will reach 2 billion shekels. That is almost a threefold increase in three years. Representatives do not know that; none of them knows that we have dramatically improved the Palestinian economy because we believe that life better for them is life better for us.

The absence of violence will enable all of us, Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and Israelis, and, I may add, Syrians and Lebanese — this is not a far-fetched dream; it is certainly one that I have — to reach a standard of living and quality of life now considered unimaginable. Once we complete the current talks we will begin negotiations for the final settlement — a final settlement of peace with the Palestinian Authority.

I urged starting these negotiations a year ago, but I regret to say that my offer was turned down. This phase is long overdue. But as the late Yitzhak Rabin noted, no dates in the Oslo accords are sacrosanct. No target date in them was met on schedule. This failure to meet deadlines did not put an end to the agreement. The Oslo accords are not about meeting deadlines. Their essential purpose is to reach a peace agreement through negotiations.

An arbitrary, unilateral declaration of a Palestinian State, in disregard of this basic purpose of Oslo, would constitute a fundamental violation of the Oslo accords. It would cause the complete collapse of the process. I strongly urge the Palestinian Authority not to take this course. Such actions will inevitably prompt unilateral responses on our part, and that development would not be good for the Palestinians, not good for Israel, and not good for peace.

We must continue to negotiate, earnestly, continuously and tirelessly until a final peace agreement is reached. No other way will do.

What would such a peace look like? I envision its success would lie in ensuring the following balance: the Palestinians should have all the powers to govern their lives and none of the powers to threaten our lives. They will have control of all aspects of their society, such as law, religion and education; industry, commerce and agriculture; tourism, health and welfare. They can prosper and flourish. What they cannot do is endanger our existence. We have a right to ensure that the Palestinian entity does not become the base for hostile forces, including foreign forces. We have a right to ensure that it does not become a base and haven for terrorists. In some cases we are talking about a base — in New York city terms — five blocks away, and without the East River. We are talking about something that is not hypothetical.

As I prepared this speech, I was informed of a terrorist attack — another one — in Jerusalem, in a bus station. Happily, no one was killed today. But can we be sure? We are seeking a peace that is peaceful, that is not violent — a peace without terror, which is the only peace that means anything.

Nor can we accept the mortal threat of weapons such as anti-aircraft missiles on the hills above our cities and airfields. If any representatives were to land at Tel Aviv airport — as many have in the past — their planes could be endangered by the inability of Israel, in a permanent peace settlement, to control the importation of these lethal weapons. This is the great challenge of the permanent status negotiations: to achieve a durable peace that will strike a balance between Palestinian self-rule and Israeli security. This peace can be achieved by negotiation, and negotiation alone. There is no other way.

Negotiation for peace is what we want with Lebanon and Syria as well. As representatives know, over six months ago our Government announced an initiative to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978). In our decision, we said that Israel was prepared to withdraw from south Lebanon provided that one condition was met: that there would be security arrangements to ensure the safety of the civilian population on both sides of the Lebanese-Israeli border.

I can report that I find myself now in the bizarre position of offering to withdraw from an Arab country and meeting with Arab refusal to negotiate such a withdrawal. But I can also report that we remain hopeful. We have not abandoned this initiative.

Peace with Syria and Lebanon will complete the circle of peace with our immediate neighbours. But the achievement of a lasting peace in our region requires addressing the ominous existential dangers which still threaten Israel beyond the immediate horizon. Both Iran

and Iraq continue their efforts to acquire non-conventional weapons and ballistic missiles with strategic reach. Iran has just successfully tested an intermediate-range missile. Iraq has declared that it will no longer accept international inspections of its non-conventional programmes, inspections mandated by Security Council resolutions.

These developments threaten not only Israel, but all the nations represented in this Hall. In the hands of the rogue regimes of the Middle East, weapons of mass destruction may pose a greater threat to the world, and to world peace, than anything we have known in the past. I want to caution members about something else: to let sweet talk by leaders of these regimes lull us into inaction is to repeat the worst mistakes of this century. What is required instead is concerted international action to prevent disaster.

That, after all, is what this body was established to do. And if it is to live up to its founders' expectations, it will have to be far more adept at distinguishing between fanatical aggressors and their intended victims. I believe that the United Nations can help foster a climate of peace and stability in our region by encouraging the reactivation of the multilateral committees conceived at the Madrid Conference. By addressing such issues as regional economic development, arms control, the resolution of refugee problems, water and the environment, these committees can produce the important building blocks of peace.

But ultimately, as in every conflict, the crucial decisions must be made by the peoples of the Middle East themselves. They must decide whether the region will continue to be an arena for terrorism and war or become a full participant in a peaceful, prosperous global economy. Cooperation and peace can give the Middle East a leading position in the world of the next millennium. Violence, terrorism and war will assure stagnation and misery.

Deep in our hearts, we know which choice we want for our children. My wife and I hope that when our two little boys grow up, the only competition they will engage in with Palestinian boys, and Egyptian boys, and Jordanian and Syrian and Lebanese boys, will be on football fields and in debating societies.

It is characteristic of the Jewish people to live in hope. It is the name of our national anthem. It is what has made it possible for us, despite unparalleled persecution, despite the most horrific calamities to befall any people or any nation, clinging to hope, to contribute as much as we have to human progress in the past 4,000 years. And this hope is reflected in the prayer we utter this week as we celebrate the Jewish new year. It is a wish we extend from our eternal capital Jerusalem, the city of peace, to all our neighbours and to all present here today: "May the year and its maledictions end, and a new year and its blessings begin". *Shana tova* — may you have a good year.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly I thank the Prime Minister, and Minister of Housing and Construction and Religious Affairs of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, Construction and Religious Affairs of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India.

Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Vajpayee (India) (*spoke in Hindi; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We wish you well in our shared endeavours in the United Nations and offer you our full cooperation. We would like to thank your predecessor for his commitment and contribution, and to commend him for his work throughout the last year.

I first addressed the Assembly as Foreign Minister in 1977. Since then I have for many years had the privilege to attend General Assembly sessions, but without ministerial responsibility. I acknowledge with gratitude the confidence of successive Prime Ministers.

To me, this also signifies the consensus on the national interests and the foreign policy of India. When I addressed the General Assembly in 1977, it was in many ways a turning point in the history of India. The Janata Government was a coalition of many factions, which united in the restoration of our people's faith in democracy. Since then we have had many changes of Government, but the people's political awareness and their faith in the institutions which uphold our constitutional system has been unwavering. Today, when I come to this rostrum as Prime Minister, I come on behalf of another coalition. India has demonstrated that democracy can take root in a developing country. I am confident that the Indian experience will prove that democracy can also provide the basis for stable, long-term economic growth in developing societies. That is the path that the people of India have chosen, and I stand before the Assembly today as the symbol of this new resurgent India.

Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The world of the 1970s has receded into history. The shackling constraints of the cold war are gone. The distinguishing feature of the last two decades has been the spread of democracy worldwide. By force of example, we have been one of the authors of the triumph of democracy. From this flows our desire to see the democratization of the United Nations itself. An international body that does not reflect, and change with, changing international realities will inevitably face a credibility deficit. We therefore support a revitalized and more effective United Nations, one that is more responsive to the concerns of the vast majority of its Member States and is better equipped to meet the challenges that are ahead of us in the twenty-first century.

The Security Council does not represent contemporary reality; it does not represent democracy in international relations. Following the end of the cold war, it acquired the freedom to act, but experience shows that the Council has acted only when it was convenient for its permanent members. The experience of Somalia does not do credit to the Security Council — and there are other examples too. Peacekeeping operations cannot be a reflection of ulterior political priorities and perceptions.

There is only one cure: to bring in new blood. The Security Council must be made representative of the membership of the United Nations. Developing countries must be made permanent members. This is a right to which the developing world is entitled. The presence of some developing countries as permanent members is inescapable if the responsibilities of the Security Council are to be effectively discharged, particularly when we see that the Council acts almost exclusively in the developing world. It is only natural that on decisions affecting the developing world, these countries should have a say, on equal terms. Along with other measures, the Security Council too must be reformed, expanding its non-permanent membership so that more developing countries can serve on it. But that alone is not enough, because as long as effective power in the Council rests with the permanent membership, the interests of the developing world will not be promoted or protected unless developing countries are made permanent members on a par with the present permanent members. Only this will make the Council an effective instrument for the international community in dealing with current and future challenges.

The new permanent members must of course have the ability to discharge the responsibilities that come with permanent membership. India believes it has that ability, and, as we have said before from this rostrum, we are prepared to accept the responsibilities of permanent membership, and believe we are qualified for it.

It will be a great day when democracy becomes the universal norm, and when the United Nations reflects that democracy in its institutions and functioning. However, open democratic societies have one scourge to contend with: terrorism. The challenge before countries like mine and other democracies is to maintain our openness, safeguard individual rights, and at the same time give no quarter to terrorists. Several speakers before me have recounted the terrible toll that terrorists have exacted worldwide, taking advantage of the trust that characterizes open societies. I recall that the Group of Seven summit almost two decades back identified terrorism as one of the most serious threats to civilized societies. Events since then, including the blowing up of the Air India Kanishka aircraft and the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, and the recent bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, have only established the correctness of that judgement.

Terrorism is one threat that affects us all equally. Terrorism takes a daily toll around the world. It is the most vicious among international crimes, and the most pervasive, pernicious and ruthless threat to the lives of men and women in open societies, and to international peace and security. In India, we have had to cope with terrorism aided and abetted by a neighbouring country for

nearly two decades. We have borne this with patience, but none should doubt the strength of our resolve to crush this challenge. Its tentacles have spread around the world. Today, it has links with illicit trade in drugs and arms and with money-laundering. In short, terrorism has gone global and it can only be defeated by organized international action.

Let us make up our minds once and for all: terrorism is a crime against humanity. Unilateral steps can hardly stand scrutiny in an open society, let alone in the eyes of the international community. It should be the primary task of all open and pluralist societies to develop collective means for tackling this menace. At its summit meeting in Durban, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries called for an international conference in 1999 to develop such a collective response. We earnestly recommend that the 1999 conference launch the process of negotiations on an international convention to provide for collective action against States and organizations which initiate or aid and abet terrorism.

Now, at the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is a growing realization that economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights form a seamless web. Analyses carried out in recent years by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees amply reflect the vicious cycle of how violations of economic, social and cultural rights inevitably lead to violations of civil and political rights. In defining its index, the Human Development Report gives a higher weighting to economic criteria for developing countries; this weighting is reduced for developed countries, highlighting the importance of the right to development for developing societies. It is therefore a matter of concern that the absolutism that some are seeking to advocate in the promotion of human rights is often at the cost of the right to development.

India has ratified both the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Other institutions in our country — the National Human Rights Commission, a free media and an independent judiciary — all serve to ensure that the rights set out in international human rights statutes are enjoyed by all citizens. We also remain convinced that unless progress is made on economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, the world will continue to witness international conflict leading to migrations, displacement of people and human rights abuses.

In the closing years of the twentieth century, the challenge of nuclear disarmament is another of the priorities facing the international community. We have successfully prohibited chemical and biological weapons in recent decades. The present century has witnessed the development and the tragic use of nuclear weapons. We must ensure that the legacy of this weapon of mass destruction is not carried into the next century.

For the last half-century, India has consistently pursued the objectives of international peace, along with equal and legitimate security for all through global disarmament. These concepts are among the basic tenets of our national security. India has, over the years, sought to enhance its national security by promoting global nuclear disarmament, convinced that a world free of nuclear weapons would enhance both global security and India's national security.

The negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) began in 1993 with a mandate that such a treaty would contribute effectively to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all aspects, to the process of nuclear disarmament and, therefore, to the enhancement of international peace and security. India participated actively and constructively in the negotiations, and sought to place the Treaty in a disarmament framework by proposing its linkage with a time-bound programme for the universal elimination of all nuclear weapons.

It is a matter of history that India's proposals were not accepted. The Treaty, as it emerged, was not accepted by India on grounds of national security. We made explicit our objection that, despite our stand having been made clear, the Treaty text made India's signature and ratification a precondition for its entry into force. Mindful of its deteriorating security environment, which obliged us to stand apart from the CTBT in 1996, India undertook a limited series of five underground tests, conducted on 11 and 13 May 1998. These tests were essential for ensuring a credible nuclear deterrent for India's national security in the foreseeable future.

These tests do not signal a dilution of India's commitment to the pursuit of global nuclear disarmament. Accordingly, after concluding this limited testing programme, India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear test explosions. We conveyed our willingness to move towards a *de jure* formalization of that obligation. In announcing a moratorium, India has already accepted the basic

obligation of the CTBT. In 1996, India could not have accepted the obligation, as such a restraint would have eroded our capability and compromised our national security.

India, having harmonized its national imperatives and security obligations and desirous of continuing to cooperate with the international community, is now engaged in discussions with key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT. We are prepared to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion, so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September 1999. We expect that other countries, as indicated in article XIV of the Treaty, will adhere to it without conditions.

After protracted discussions, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is now in a position to begin negotiations on a treaty that will prohibit the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Once again, we are conscious that this is a partial step. Such a treaty, as and when it is concluded and enters into force, will not eliminate existing nuclear arsenals. Yet we will participate in these negotiations in good faith in order to ensure a treaty that is non-discriminatory and meets India's security imperatives. India will pay serious attention to any other multilateralinitiatives in this area during the course of the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

As a responsible State committed to non-proliferation, India has undertaken that it shall not transfer these weapons or related know-how to other countries. We have an effective system of export controls and shall make it more stringent where necessary, including by expanding control lists of equipment and technology to make them more contemporary and effective in the context of a nuclear India. At the same time, as a developing country, we are conscious that nuclear technology has a number of peaceful applications, and we shall continue to cooperate actively with other countries in this regard, in keeping with our international responsibilities.

A few weeks ago, at the Non-Aligned Summit in Durban, India proposed, and the Movement agreed, that an international conference be held, preferably in 1999, with the objective of arriving at an agreement before the end of this millennium on a phased programme for the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. I call upon all members of the international community, and particularly the other nuclear-weapon States, to join in this endeavour. Let us pledge that when we assemble here in the new millennium it will be to welcome the commitment that mankind shall never again be subjected to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The decade of the 1990s has fallen far short of expectations. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the global economic scene. The sense of triumphalism that heralded the wave of global capitalism is now giving way to caution and realism. What was initially seen as an Asian flu is now spreading to other continents.

The hypothesis that unfettered capital flows would foster economic development, with the global financial markets adjusting the exchange rates, stands falsified. What we have seen is the growth of a large volume of "virtual money" that has not been generated by productive economic activity. But the power of the "virtual money" is real, evident in the fact that national regulatory mechanisms are unable to cope with the impact of its rapid movement in and out of currencies. Its volatility in the short run follows not economic logic but rumour and sentiment, with results that are self-reinforcing. In developing countries and in western financial capitals, there is now a growing acceptance that premature liberalization of capital markets has been a primary cause of the current crisis.

Does it mean that the world should turn back from globalization? Our answer is an emphatic "No". Rising economic interdependence is a phenomenon driven by the technological imperative, but we must learn how to manage the change. India has not been affected as severely as some other countries, largely because we adopted policies that were more prudent. But a drop in commodity prices by 30 per cent in a year and a reduction in net capital flows to the emerging markets by 50 per cent will have a negative impact on growth everywhere, including in the developed world.

I must emphasize that democratically elected leadership in an open developing society such as India also faces another challenge. We cannot let an unbridled free market system aggravate existing economic and social disparities. In fact, we need policy instruments to reduce disparities, thus creating a more stable environment in the long term. Such policies are necessary in accountable democracies and are in no way inconsistent with managed liberalization.

It is high time that we begin a new international dialogue on the future of a global and interdependent economy. This is a task for the sovereign States

represented here and cannot be left solely to the dynamics of an unregulated market place.

I think I speak for all of us when I say that we are on the threshold of a new age. This is an overused phrase, but we are all aware that an exciting new universe is within our reach. Several centuries ago, Isaac Newton described his scientific discoveries as pebbles on the beach, while the ocean of truth lay undiscovered. It was modest of that great scientist to so describe his work, but I believe that we are now actually sailing
in the ocean of truth. We have made exciting discoveries and will make many more which will move humankind forward.

And yet there is also an uneasy feeling that all is not well. The world is not at ease with itself. In almost all parts of the world forces are bubbling under the surface tranquillity that threaten the gains of the last century and seek to lead the world towards bigotry, violence and unhealthy exclusivism.

India has a message — not a new one, for almost all religions have expressed the thought before. But we have preserved the tenets of freedom, equality and tolerance in our daily lives. If the world of the twenty-first century is to be a better place than the world we have seen so far, these values must prevail. History also shows that these are easier to prescribe than to observe. And yet, as we move towards ever closer interdependence, there is no alternative. The world and its leaders must summon the will to rise to the occasion and enter the new age with a new outlook. This is the task before us, and I declare India's readiness to make its full contribution in the testing times ahead.

I close with an ancient "sloka" from the Rig Ved as composed thousands of years ago in Sanskrit, the oldest language in the world:

"Svastir manushebhyaha
Oordhvam Jugatu beshajam
Sam no astu dvipathe
Sam Chathusthpate
Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti"

This means: Let all human beings be blessed with prosperity. Let all flora and fauna which are life line of all creatures grow abundantly. Let there be harmony with all two-legged creations. Let there be harmony with all four-legged creations. Let there be peace, peace, peace.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of India for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Atal Behari Vajpavee, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bronislaw Geremek, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Geremek (Poland): Allow me first to congratulate the President and wish him every success in carrying out his responsible task. The delegation of Poland will do its best to assist him in his important functions.

I also pay tribute to the outgoing President, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, an eminent statesman from Ukraine, a country with which we have developed good-neighbourly ties of friendship and cooperation, for his excellent guidance of the work of the Assembly during its fifty-second session.

I would also like to assure the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, not only of our respect and admiration, but also of our continued support for his tireless efforts to make the United Nations live up to the expectations of the twenty-first century and to the ideals set out in the Charter.

We have a saying in Poland that is variously attributed to the Chinese or to the Jews — two nations well steeped in suffering and in wisdom:

"Unfortunate one, you shall live to see your dreams satisfied."

And I, indeed, have come to experience the full measure of that truth. Ten years ago a dissident, I could barely even dream that I would be at the helm of my free nation's foreign affairs, and in that role preside over the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), an organization which spans three continents in its attempt to promote security and cooperation in a conflict-torn world.

And yet those 10 years ago, had I imagined that such a future were possible I would probably have believed that a man in my position could indeed help change the world, make it a better, safer place. Like so

many of us present here in this Hall, I had to learn the bitter lessons of the limitations of power. These lessons should indeed teach us humility, but not serve as an alibi for not assuming our obligations.

The world today is a better and safer place than it was 10 years ago, before the fall of the Berlin Wall. For all the needless suffering, the agony of hunger, the scourge of ethnic hatred and war, the shame of underdevelopment, the evil of oppression that human beings had to endure in so many places on the face of the planet — these are less than a decade ago. And even now the perpetrators attempt to conceal their doings, to show it is not so, and more, that suffering is contentment, war is peace, and oppression is liberty. Hypocrisy, as we all know, is a compliment sin pays to virtue.

The world is a better place because time and time again evil has been avoided, circumscribed or reduced thanks to preventive action taken by concerned States. This action could be something as simple as sending food where there is none, or as complicated as over a dozen nations pooling their military resources to prevent a new outbreak of ethnic hatred in Bosnia, and helping to rebuild that devastated nation.

The world will never be the same. The world economy is currently confronted with the biggest financial challenge in a half century. We note the increasing interest on the part of politicians as well as economists in market intervention and capital controls. Obviously, a serious situation may indeed call for desperate remedies, but the really serious risk to the world economy seems to lie in a retreat from free market ideals and principles.

Actions to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction are an evident reflection of efforts made to consolidate peace and international security. Systematic progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, apart from important American-Russian and American-Chinese agreements, could become even more notable if the Parliament of the Russian Federation, heeding the appeals by the international community, ratified the START II agreements. We expect and hope that the indispensable decision will be taken in Moscow with no further delay.

We welcome the decision of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament to enter negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. This is a significant and indispensable step for the further consolidation of the global regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, we witness with concern and regret the developments in South Asia that are so dangerous to peace and international security. Although we do not question the right of any nation to sovereign decisions on issues concerning its national security interests, nothing, in our opinion, justifies acceptance of the nuclear option. The choice of the road of nuclear armaments by India and Pakistan comes as a blow to the ideals personified by Mahatma Gandhi.

Together with the entire international community, we address to the leaders of India and Pakistan an appeal to refrain from any actions that could make the situation worse in the Indian subcontinent and to join, immediately and unconditionally, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The sixteenth-century Polish humanist Jakub Przyluski wrote:

> "Since man is ... more inclined to live in society than bees, ants or cranes, an isolated life is a thing most contrary to human nature. Man could then neither suffice to himself, nor come to the rescue of others... And since nature has established some kind of affinity between us, and the same definition encompasses all humankind, we are to consider it vile if man threatens man."

We, indeed, consider it vile if man threatens man. But it is in our nature, or at least in our better nature, to come to the rescue of others, the more so if by making others more secure, our own security is enhanced. Furthermore, neighbours usually know best the nature of the problems affecting the neighbourhood; they are therefore best placed to try to resolve them. That is why the concept of collective security is becoming so increasingly important and popular. But we must all learn this if this Organization is to successfully negotiate the transition into the twenty-first century. The United Nations has grown beyond the hopes and expectations — indeed, beyond control.

Many of its specialized agencies accomplish their important jobs quietly and efficiently. We have perfect relations with many of them, especially with the United Nations Development Programme office in Warsaw.

The Secretary-General is to be praised for his efforts to make the United Nations a better example of how the world's institutions could function, rather than a cartoon of the way they actually do. But he can do this only with our support. Also, we can no longer delay the reform of the Security Council and the General Assembly. I am sure all of us look towards these changes with some dread, because knowing how wrong things could have turned out, we cannot believe that they have been going right until now. The United Nations is ripe for change.

One of the most pressing issues on the United Nations reform agenda is the financial crisis. It is true this crisis is due in great part to the mismanagement of resources and, at times, excessive spending. But at least as much can be attributed to the deficit brought about by some Members' refusal to pay their dues on time. True, it is in large part because that pressure that a favourable climate for change emerged within the institution itself.

It has become a truism to say that peacekeeping is ineffective when there is no peace to keep, and that peacemaking is impossible if there is no will to sustain the unavoidable costs. But this does not mean that peacekeeping is ineffective. A wide spectrum of examples, from Cyprus to Moldova, shows that the contrary is true. But even in a successful peacekeeping operation we run the risk that we will not only keep the peace but also preserve the hatreds, envies and jealousies which were the root causes of the conflict in the first place. In this sense, each peacekeeping operation must also be one of peacemaking.

Armed conflicts between States are giving way to internal conflicts, as in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia. Consequently, the United Nations peacekeeping forces are being faced, in many cases, with the dilemma of having to depart from the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the State that is being torn apart by a civil war. We remain convinced that when a direct threat is posed to peace and security, the United Nations must be properly equipped to discharge its role and should not remain indifferent and ignore human suffering.

Poland is proud of its continuous participation in United Nations peacekeeping efforts, following our old tradition of struggle "for freedom, ours and yours". We are currently providing the largest contingent of troops involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are convinced that the Organization should not allow the highest price to be paid in terms of the lives of women and men serving in the field under the United Nations banner. The security of people in United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian operations must be ensured.

My country finds itself at the centre of European transformation. Our aspirations to join European and trans-Atlantic political and military structures are in the process of being satisfied, fulfilling the dreams of a nation long subject to the cataclysms of European history. But far from turning our back on our neighbours who as yet remain outside these structures, we indeed wish to intensify our cooperation with them. We believe this would be conducive to a better climate on the continent, and in the best interests of both our neighbours and our allies.

This is especially true of our cooperation with other Central European nations. Poland, solidly anchored in collective security and regional cooperation structures, can develop in peace and security and substantially contribute to the development of others. If there ever was a win-win scenario, this is it.

It would be arrogant and unhelpful if we believed we could give lessons to others. But we do believe deeply that our experience of the last decade shows that nations can move away from authoritarianism, through negotiations — what we called round-table negotiations — to then successfully build a democratic system based on the rule of law, individual freedoms, freedom of economic enterprise and political democracy. To those, near or far, who proclaim that theirs will be a different course, based on the presumed specificity of their culture, history, customs and circumstance, we say, "Please reconsider. Do not waste the creative energy of your nations in futile experiments and grotesque performances." This will not work. And time is a resource none can afford to waste.

But at the same time, to those who would say, "Follow us, for history has proved that we are right", — we would like to say that even among friends we can differ. We do not believe too much in the efficacy of punishment and sanction. Rather, we expect that nations need to develop apace. We can but help them on their way.

This is best seen in the functioning of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which my country has the honour of chairing this year. It would be hard to imagine a collection of nations more geographically, historically, economically, culturally and politically diverse. Assuming the

chairmanship of this organization for 1998, we have faced important questions and challenges. Can the organization that is the heritage of the past successfully cope with the challenges of the future? Is it needed during a period of both globalization and regionalization, a period of multi-polarity, when we are striving for the universalization of the Earth's civilization? Will it be able to prevent conflicts and regulate inter-State relations?

The Polish chairmanship started at the moment of significant changes in the so-called European security environment: when the Atlantic Alliance decided on its enlargement; when a conflict erupted in Kosovo, threatening South-Eastern Europe with destabilization; when the countries of Central Asia, born from the territory of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, signalled their more intensive interest in joining the current of values that are the foundation of the OSCE; and when signs of another crisis appeared in Russia. There arose the question of how to include OSCE activity in United Nations efforts for peace and security.

We have found constructive and positive answers to many of those questions. The organization of an all-inclusive membership of the States of the region, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, turned out to be necessary to respond to threats left by the cold war. Two priorities came to the fore: to prevent conflicts by reaching the roots at their early stage of appearance and to strengthen human rights and democracy, which the OSCE calls the "human dimension". We have also taken up the ambitious challenge of preparing a European security charter, which would help to facilitate the functioning of cooperation in security within the OSCE, and would make it possible for all States, regardless of their membership in alliances or other groupings, to participate in the common effort of building a safe, democratic and united Europe.

We want the OSCE community to have neither centre nor peripheries, neither more equal nor less equal. In many cases, as in the conflicts in Kosovo or Tajikistan, the lesson was bitter. One of the conclusions is that in the contemporary world, no organization can act alone. The consolidation of standards of civilizational cooperation within the OSCE must be coherent with the activity of other organizations, in this case the United Nations, the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance, the Council of Europe and subregional organizations such as the Council of the Baltic States.

We need this solidarity. There I wish to comment on the resolution adopted by the Security Council yesterday concerning Kosovo. It was an example of unity and solidarity, and I hope it will send a message to stop the bloodshed in that region and stop the activities of all those who are trying to introduce violence, repression and terrorism there.

The OSCE has been able to engage in preventive diplomacy. We have done so together; we have strengthened our collective security together; we have fielded a host of projects in almost every imaginable sphere of human collective activity. In all fairness, one has to take into consideration the conflicts avoided elsewhere in the Balkans, as well as in Central Asia and in the Caucasus. We do not proclaim to be a model for others. The organization itself developed almost by chance, as a fortuitous assembly of the members of the two cold-war blocs. But we have been able to manage the transition and to set standards that we all try to maintain. Maybe other regions of conflicting interests could use some of our experience, both the successes and the mistakes.

In the Middle East, we are facing a challenging and difficult time. Poland is committed to a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in that region. Therefore, we are deeply concerned by the stalemate in the peace process, and we strongly support all efforts to revitalize it, on the basis of Security Council resolutions, the principles of the Madrid Conference and the Oslo accords.

In many aspects the world is now a safer and better place to live in than it was a decade ago. But there are new threats and dangers. We must deter and defeat terrorist acts. Poland continues to promote the idea of the elaboration of the comprehensive convention against organized crime, which should generate wide and efficient cooperation between States, since organized transnational crime cannot be successfully suppressed by any State alone.

Borderlines are blurred. Ordinary crime blends with the organized underworld, which in turn intermingles with the terrorist community, and that in turn finds support and relief in more than one of the world's capitals. Drugs and guns are replacing more conventional currencies as the universal currency of evil, profits from one serving to promote the dissemination of the other, in a concerted assault on human life itself. It is indeed a culture of death which seems to unite those who put guns and drugs into the hands of the young and teach them to hate others because they are of the wrong faith, race or nation. We cannot counter that evil with the same

decisiveness, haste and cunning. We can, however, continue to support the alternative: a culture of life, founded on respect for the individual, his inalienable rights, dignity and freedom. In terms of everyday reality, this means that the determined effort of all States is required to implement the basic conventions guaranteeing these values — to implement them at home and to refuse to tolerate their violations abroad.

Of these conventions, perhaps none is more important than the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we have been solemnly celebrating. And yet, among States whose representatives have expressed their attachment to that document, not a few deny their citizens the basic rights the Declaration guarantees. Obviously, the powerful political interests which lie behind such behaviour will not bow to simple declarations, nor will the international democratic community use force to implement its values.

It is our deep conviction that we should continuously adapt United Nations human rights machinery to present and future developments in this area. The biggest challenge we have been facing over recent years is the violation of human rights in the context of armed conflicts and tensions of a domestic or civil character. For years the international community has not been able to cope with this problem, although in the meantime the United Nations has developed a significant peacekeeping capacity. It is only after the traumatic experience in the former Yugoslavia and in the Great Lakes region that the approach has changed.

"No man is an island"; no State is an island. Connected, as the Polish writer whom I quoted said, by a common definition of our humanity, we cannot help but try to implement the noblest goal, incarnate in the name of this Organization: the Nations United, in our common humanity, our planet and our future.

Address by Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Yilmaz (Turkey): This is my first General Assembly as Prime Minister. I was here as Foreign Minister, when the waves of change were sweeping away the cold-war era. I recall the optimism shared by many about a more humane and harmonious international system. I remember the sounds of joy as freedom, democracy and the market economy rang victorious on a global scale.

Indeed, significant changes have taken place since then. New States have joined the family of nations. A broader and deeper commitment to contemporary values has taken root. The international climate long dictated by ideological divisions has withered away. At no time in recent history have nations become so close to each other around shared values.

Yet this is not the full story. The late twentieth century is full of paradoxes and competing currents. For the fortunate among us, the world has never offered more — better education, better health care, greater prosperity. But these fruits are denied to the vast majority of the planet's population. The number of people who live in dire poverty is growing.

Admittedly, our overall security environment has improved. But the resurgence of aggression, extreme ethnic nationalism, tribalism, religious fundamentalism, racism, xenophobia and cultural discrimination pose new threats to international peace and stability. Cultural and religious intolerance is breeding more conflicts than ever before. International terrorism, openly sponsored by some States, has become a formidable threat to civilized societies. The interconnected groups that engage in terrorism, organized crime and drug-smuggling challenge our security and well-being.

The threat of nuclear confrontation between the super-Powers has been eliminated; the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction still looms on the horizon.

The two contradictory trends in the world — one towards fragmentation and conflict, the other towards globalization and cooperation — require a careful and sober analysis. This new dialectic defines the framework in which we have to operate. The integrity of the nation State, and the demands of an even more interdependent world must be harmonized and balanced.

The United Nations was our collective response to the challenges of the past. It was built on the ashes of the Second World War. The bitter experiences of that war left their imprint on the Charter, the rules that govern its work and its structure. To its credit, this Organization has helped bring peace, prosperity and hope to millions of people around the globe. Indeed, over a span of 53 years the United Nations has managed very complex humanitarian emergencies, from civil wars to the mass movement of refugees and health epidemics. For millions of people around the world, the United Nations is not a faceless institution. It is the difference between peace and war. It is food for those on the borderline of starvation and medicine to those on the brink of death. But, above all, the United Nations remains our hope for a better, peaceful and secure future.

In this time of challenge and change, the United Nations is more important than ever. It is here at the United Nations that we must fight together against the forces of destruction. It is here that we must strive to strengthen democratic institutions, to further promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to punish those responsible for crimes against humanity.

It is here that we must open the door to development for many nations trapped in poverty. Their misery is a challenge to all of us. But, above all, the United Nations must promote justice so that peace may endure.

As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, it is our duty to chart a new course for the United Nations and set a common standard for the behaviour of nations.

I suggest that we should focus greater effort on the following areas.

The first is preventing conflicts in potential crisis areas. I believe there is no shortage of information on a brewing crisis. By the time a crisis is addressed at the United Nations, it has already taken on critical proportions and often reached a point of no return. Bosnia is the most tragic example. Regional organizations should play a more effective role in defusing tensions from their onset. Regional organizations and the United Nations should establish an effective mechanism for coordination and consultation.

The second area is peace-building. We must devise a new approach to peace-building to provide lasting security. Even when a ceasefire is holding or elections have taken place, the social and institutional grounds appear to be very shaky. The United Nations must have both a programme and experts to help countries emerge from conflicts.

The third area is sustainable development. If the United Nations is to maintain its credibility for its Members, it must enable people to lift themselves out of poverty. There must be more effective coordination between United Nations aid, international efforts and contributions from donor countries. Obviously, funding is a major concern, but a coordinated and streamlined strategy is equally important.

The emphasis recently placed by the United Nations on the problems of Africa is an encouraging starting point. It should give direction to our efforts to eliminate poverty in all regions where we witness human misery.

The fourth area is one standard for all. Despite all solemn declarations, international conventions and the legal framework, there seems to be no end in sight to discriminatory practices and double standards. The division of the world along religious, ethnic and cultural fault lines is an invitation to disaster. We must all ensure that no nation in the world feels discriminated against on the grounds of its cultural or religious identity.

My final point pertains to the fight against terrorism. We have to eliminate this major threat to our citizens and nations. I share the views expressed by President Clinton. We have to place the combat against terrorism at the top of our agenda. There must be no excuses, no false justifications.

The demands on the United Nations have grown enormously. We all agree that reform is vital. We support the Secretary-General in his substantive reforms. We believe that reform must be comprehensive. It must also include the reform of the Security Council. Piecemeal efforts and inadequate measures do not offer a solution. The representative character of the Security Council must be enhanced to meet the expectations of the largest segment of the United Nations membership. The Council must become more responsive and transparent. Reform must render this organ more accountable, effective and democratic, so that it can exercise authority and offer moral guidance.

Turkish foreign policy is defined by a blend of our history, culture and geostrategic location at the crossroads of Asia and Europe. It corresponds to the aspirations of our people for peace, stability and prosperity. As a secular democratic country with a predominantly Muslim

population, we combine our national heritage with a strong commitment to modernism.

On all the issues and disputes that figure on the agenda of the international community, our policies are clear and consistent. We oppose aggression and believe that any breach of international law and legitimacy must not be condoned. We have always advocated the resolution of disputes through peaceful means and dialogue. Turkey has been an active actor in the efforts to contribute to the peaceful settlement of outstanding disputes. We participate extensively in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

We live in a region where there are major currents of instability and conflict. Indeed, almost every major issue that consumes the international community — from the Balkans to the Caucasus, from the Middle East to the Gulf — affects our security and well-being. Conscious of these challenges, we have assumed an important role in contributing to the efforts aimed at peacefully resolving conflicts and preserving security and stability. We are actively promoting regional peace through regional cooperation initiatives. Both the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization are cases in point.

The Balkan region is a test case with regard to the challenges we face in the post-cold-war era. It is here that we must prove that multicultural and multi-ethnic societies have a chance to live in peace and harmony. We thought that we had all drawn our bitter lessons from the tragedy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We must never allow it to happen again.

However, the recent violence in Kosovo is similar to what transpired in Bosnia and Herzegovina; it is of the same making, the result of the same mentality. Within the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Kosovo must regain its autonomous status in a manner that satisfies all the ethnic groups.

Regional stability is a prerequisite for international peace. That is why we have taken a number of initiatives to resolve outstanding problems with some of our neighbours. A problem that has preoccupied Turkish-Bulgarian relations for almost half a century has recently been resolved successfully in good faith by the two countries. This achievement demonstrates vividly that even the most complex issues can be resolved if there is political will and courage on both sides.

Several interrelated problems, mostly pertaining to the Aegean and inherited from the past, continue to mar Turkish-Greek relations. It is our ardent hope that these questions will be addressed between the two countries through a meaningful dialogue, without excluding any United Nations-agreed method of peaceful settlement. We call upon the Government of Greece to dedicate itself to a dialogue with Turkey.

The question of Cyprus is at a critical juncture. The course pursued by Greece and the Greek Cypriots poses a serious threat to the security of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and of Turkey. It is also detrimental to peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean.

On the military front, the policies of the Greek/Greek Cypriot camp have heightened tensions on the island. The clock is ticking for the deployment of the S-300 missile system.

On the political front, the decision of the European Union to start accession negotiations with the Greek Cypriot side has altered all the parameters and the established framework for a settlement. Regrettably, this process serves only to perpetuate the division of the island.

Turkey fully supports the initiative tabled at this critical time by President Denktaş on 31 August 1998. This proposal of historic importance foresees the establishment of a Cyprus confederation. We believe this proposal provides a perspective for a just and lasting settlement. It corresponds to the realities of the island. It protects the vital and legitimate interests of all the parties concerned. It aims at preserving the integrity of the island. It is in line with the United Nations approach to reaching a freely negotiated and mutually acceptable settlement to the Cyprus issue.

We believe that the proposed confederation can finally open an avenue for peace and reconciliation based on a common destiny for the two peoples in Cyprus.

The impasse in the Middle East peace process and the continuing plight of the Palestinian people are a source of great concern for Turkey. An incomplete peace exposes the Middle East to the risks of further instability. It also dims the prospects for the people of the region to enjoy an economically and socially sound future.

Turkey is a friend of the Arab nations. We share a common history and a rich cultural heritage. We value

these strong bonds. Turkey is also a friend of Israel. We are, therefore, all the more concerned by the lack of progress in bringing a permanent state of peace and stability to the Middle East.

In the same vein, we look forward to the reintegration into the international community of Iraq, with its territorial integrity intact, through the full implementation of the Security Council resolutions and the lifting of the sanctions.

The crisis in Afghanistan also threatens peace and stability within the wider context of the region. The Afghan conflict can only be overcome through inter-Afghan dialogue and the establishment of a broad-based Government. The United Nations should have a central role in this regard.

The overall situation in the Caucasus is a major destabilizing factor. It has a direct bearing on our security and well-being. We call for the urgent settlement of the Nagorny Karabakh dispute and the termination of the Armenian occupation of Azeri territory. The Armenian leadership must commit itself to the efforts of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is our sincere conviction that the interests of the Armenian people will be better served by focusing on a peaceful future, rather than militancy.

Peace and stability in the Caucasus also require the resolution of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia are our neighbours, with which we wish to work together for our common prosperity and security.

At the threshold of a new millennium, our agenda for the twenty-first century must be inspired by the vision of the founding fathers. We must rededicate ourselves to the purposes and principles of the Charter. We must fulfil our pledge to succeeding generations. To this end, we must join our forces to maintain international peace and security.

Turkey, for its part, is prepared to assume its share as an actor in the preservation of international peace, security and prosperity. In fact, I would like to take this opportunity to state from this rostrum that we are a serious contender for the Security Council in the year 2000. Turkey is eager to place its assets at the service of regional and global peace and stability as a member of the Council.

The Charter is a contract among nations to combine our efforts to realize the aspirations and goals of the peoples of the world. It is high time that we fulfilled its terms. It is also time to build on the progress we have made for the cause of peace, security and prosperity of the global community. We must now give a new direction to our efforts. As the world turns a new leaf, let us rise to the occasion.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: The next speaker is Her Excellency Mrs. Nadezhda Mihailova, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, to whom I give the floor.

Mrs. Mihailova (Bulgaria): Allow me, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and to wish him every success in guiding this important session to tangible results.

I would like also to express our appreciation to Mr. Udovenko for the proficiency and insight with which he presided over the fifty-second session.

The Republic of Bulgaria, as an associated country, has aligned itself with the statement on behalf of the European Union, delivered by Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria.

While the search for new approaches and responses to the processes of globalization confronts humanity with new challenges, existing cases of conflict, unrest and underdevelopment bear the mark of the divisions and confrontations of past decades. The question we have to address now is whether the next millennium will be one of continued unrest and confrontation or one of peace and prosperity for all United Nations Member States, big or small.

Globalization and interdependence are bringing profound changes to the world we live in. An increasing number of issues, such as the economic and financial crisis, organized crime, terrorism and regional conflicts, cannot be effectively resolved by individual countries.

Therefore, international cooperation is more necessary than ever.

Today we are combining our efforts against the new global threat, terrorism. But we must not forget that terrorism appears mainly in unstable regions or weak countries, and from there spreads to the rest of the world. That is why the problems of such unstable countries can neither remain their own responsibility, nor even problems of their regions. The problems seem to be much more global. The question today is how to combat the criminal world, how to manage crisis and regional conflicts, how to feed and shelter refugees. Tomorrow the question will be how to guarantee democratic stability through long-term engagements. The other approach is only to react to the consequences, thus adding new problems. Such an approach does not solve the problem, but becomes part of it; moreover the problem is multiplied through its negative influence on neighbouring countries.

We also believe that economic security is an essential part of the framework in which our efforts to make a better world are made. We are convinced that security can be guaranteed not by "hot money", but only through real, long-term investments, which are crucial for a successful economic restructuring.

Bulgaria has managed to gain some knowledge and experience in handling the problems of the reform process. In the past year and a half the Government has managed to achieve: first, economic stability as a basis for moving forward with structural reform and sustainable economic growth; secondly, modernization of the public administration; and, thirdly, efficient enforcement of the rule of law in civil society.

Resolute steps have been taken, in compliance with the Government programme "Bulgaria — 2001", to translate into practice the new foreign policy priorities. At its core are the integration of Bulgaria into the European and transatlantic political, economic and defence structures, and the creation of a climate of confidence, stability and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.

We are now engaged in active diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting the principles of democracy and stability in the region of South-Eastern Europe in order to contribute to the peaceful settlement of conflicts. I would also like to stress that my country has already achieved significant progress in another important area, combating organized crime and corruption and promoting regional cooperation in this field.

Let me now address the complex situation in the Balkans. I would like to note the progress made in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. We consider that the extended presence of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) would contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability in this region.

Bulgaria is particularly concerned about the continuing tension in Kosovo. The crisis has reached a point where there is no more room for general statements and palliative solutions. The conflict in Kosovo has resulted in thousands of civilian casualties. There is a serious threat of deepening the crisis and a substantial risk of spillover to other parts of South-Eastern Europe. We are convinced that the only credible instrument for solving the problem is negotiations between the parties involved, which have to examine in a responsible manner all proposals for a peaceful settlement. We support Security Council resolution 1199 (1998) adopted yesterday.

It is worth pointing out that as early as last February Bulgaria proposed that the countries generating stability in the region should unite their efforts in search of a peaceful solution to this problem. The joint declarations of the Foreign Ministers of countries of South-Eastern Europe, adopted on the initiative of Bulgaria, reflect the will of these countries to make their contribution to the efforts of the Contact Group. They also illustrate the new spirit in relations between the States in the region and their responsible approach to security and stability. For the first time in many years our countries managed to put aside their differences so as to elaborate and express a common position on a problem of immediate concern. This approach sets the groundwork for the establishment of a politico-diplomatic mechanism for crisis management and prevention.

In our view, those States which would like to contribute to stability and security in the region have to take into consideration the interests and positions of the countries situated there. A common understanding has been expressed that any measures aimed at settling the problems of the region, sanctions included, should take into account the political and economic stability of South-Eastern Europe. They should not infringe upon the interests of the countries involved. Therefore, we believe that efficient measures should be of a political, and not of an economic, character.

An issue of special relevance for Bulgaria and also, I believe, for other countries of the region, is the negative impact on the national economy of the strict implementation of the economic sanctions imposed until recently by the Security Council on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As is well known, Bulgaria strictly abided by the Council's decisions, suffering as a result economic losses which have almost been equal to Bulgaria's foreign debt for three years. Given the continued relevance of that issue internationally, Bulgaria supports the view that since all provisions of the Charter are of equal importance, assistance to third States affected by sanctions has to be taken into consideration together with the imposition of sanctions. The elaboration of a concrete United Nations mechanism for this purpose is therefore of the utmost importance.

It is incumbent upon the United Nations to find ways and means of alleviating the negative consequences of sanctions with regard to third States. It is our view that closer and more direct participation in the whole process by all third States which could be adversely affected by the imposition of sanctions is necessary. We are confident that discussion of this issue at the present session will yield more concrete results in accordance with the decisions already adopted and the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted under resolution 52/162.

We are convinced that lasting stability in South-Eastern Europe is possible only through multilateral security cooperation coupled with effective economic, infrastructural, cultural, information and other integrated links to other parts of Europe. In this regard, the expansion of the European and transatlantic organizations to South-Eastern Europe will create a belt of security in the area and prevent possible regional crises in the future.

As an integral part of Europe, Bulgaria regards our accelerated accession to the European Union and full membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an expression of our political choice based on broad public support. These priorities are embedded in the national security concept approved by the Bulgarian parliament last April. Since Bulgaria is determined to promote and enhance the values of democracy, we are certainly interested in ensuring that these values become widely accepted throughout South-Eastern Europe.

The Republic of Bulgaria welcomes its inclusion in the process of enlargement of the European Union, together with other associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus. The Bulgarian Government is fully aware that our accession aspirations are contingent on the success of the domestic, economic and legislative reforms. It is against this background that a national strategy for accession to the European Union, outlining the main activities of the country from a long-term perspective, was adopted last March.

The Bulgarian Government has developed a clear-cut national strategy to meet the criteria for NATO membership, based on a comprehensive national programme of preparation which is being constantly updated and optimized. Bulgaria has the political will and is undertaking concrete steps to fulfil in regional terms the objectives of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the enhanced Partnership for Peace. Our positive attitude is reflected in the ongoing regional political dialogue and the practical follow-up measures to enhance regional security and defence cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.

We consider multilateral confidence and security-building measures to be an important aspect of political cooperation in the region. An important example of this cooperation is the initiative to create a multinational peace force in South-Eastern Europe. In the course of the negotiations on this project, Bulgaria proposed hosting the joint headquarters of the force in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv. The establishment of the force will strengthen the spirit of confidence and cooperation in the region.

Another key aspect of regional cooperation is the process of good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe initiated at the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe in Sofia in 1996. Annual ministerial meetings have been held since then, as well as a number of specialized expert meetings devoted to issues of common interest in various fields, including transport, energy, transborder cooperation, combating organized crime and drug-trafficking.

Closely linked to the maintenance of international peace and security is the fight against terrorism and international crime. We condemn all terrorist acts and lament the loss of life and the destruction inflicted by them. The most recent deplorable examples of such acts were the horrible bomb attacks in some African countries. We share the view that the threat of terrorism requires a decisive and joint response by the whole international community. Bulgaria supports the activities of the United Nations aimed at setting norms and standards for the fight against terrorism and international

crime through negotiating various legal instruments and creating the appropriate institutions for this purpose.

We consider that successfully combating terrorism and organized crime in some countries cannot be achieved through the efforts of their Governments alone. It requires the effective involvement of other States, which have the means and the experience in this field. Bulgaria fully supports the recent initiative by France and Great Britain to convene a high-level conference in London this autumn aimed at depriving terrorists of their support. We note with appreciation that on 18 July this year, the Diplomatic Conference in Rome adopted the Statute of the International Criminal Court. I would like to reiterate my country's confidence that the establishment in the foreseeable future of the International Criminal Court will be an efficient step towards deterring possible perpetrators from committing terrorist acts.

The broadening of the human aspect of development through democracy and participation has been widely accepted and has become one of the priorities of United Nations activities. This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The principle of the indivisibility of universally recognized civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights continues to be a key element of today's system for the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms. The designation of 1998 as the International Year for Human Rights could stimulate a further restructuring of United Nations human rights activities, strengthening the staff of and securing adequate financial resources for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In this respect we would like to commend the relevant measures taken by the High Commissioner, Mrs. Mary Robinson, and to reiterate our support for her efforts to this end.

Better implementation of international standards could be achieved by improving the existing mechanisms and by open dialogue on most sensitive issues, including those related to human rights in individual States. Accordingly, the Bulgarian Government attaches great importance to the enjoyment of all human rights by Bulgarians living abroad and considers respect for their rights to be an essential element for the enhancement of bilateral relations.

Bulgaria supports the ongoing process of reform pursued consistently by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and aimed at the streamlining and strengthening of the Organization and at making it more efficient and responsive to the new realities. One of the substantial issues of overall United Nations reform is the question of representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Bulgaria reiterates its willingness to support such an enlargement of the Council, which could guarantee its effectiveness and enhance its capacity to maintain international peace and security. In our view the enlargement should envisage the preservation of the balance between the permanent and non-permanent members, as well as among regional groups. As the membership of the Group of Eastern European States has doubled in the last decade, an additional non-permanent seat for this group should be secured. A decision on the enlargement of the Council and on its working methods should be supported by the broadest possible consensus, including all the Council's permanent members.

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the activities of the United Nations in the field of sustainable development and is closely following the United Nations dialogue and the activities of United Nations bodies and agencies on the issues of demography, social development, women and narcotic drugs. The special session of the General Assembly on narcotic drugs, held in June of this year, merits particular mention in this regard. That session reflected the determination of Member States to combine their efforts in the fight against drugs, and its results contributed to the common effort to achieve sustainable development.

As a country with an economy in transition, Bulgaria cooperates actively with the United Nations system of specialized agencies and programmes. Our interest is to develop this cooperation further. We are looking forward to more streamlined activities thanks to the potential of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for capacity-building and assistance in the development and execution of joint projects. At the same time, the basic principles of universality and primary responsibility of Governments for the process should be preserved. In this regard the system of resident coordinators and the effort to make this more operational will play an important role. Here I would like to express our satisfaction with the performance of the UNDP office in Sofia.

For Bulgaria, development and economic growth will be impossible without full participation in world economic and financial exchanges. In our opinion, the United Nations and its institutions could be more strongly involved in the solution of the specific problems of economic transition and reforms.

Disarmament issues continue to have an important place in overall efforts to secure a better world for future generations. We agree with the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that disarmament is at the centre of our mission of peace and development, and we welcome his decision to re-establish the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Bulgarian Government attaches high priority to international efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an important step in that direction, and support the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee to conduct negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. In this context, we were deeply concerned by the nuclear tests conducted by India and by Pakistan earlier this year. Bulgaria has associated itself with statements by the presidency of the European Union calling on India and Pakistan to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to sign the CTBT, as well as to participate in negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty with the aim of maintaining a strong global non-proliferation regime.

We favour the strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and believe that further acceleration of the negotiations and an early conclusion of the protocol to the Convention is required.

As a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bulgaria would like to contribute to enlarging the number of accessions to the Convention in order to achieve recognition of the prohibition of chemical weapons as a universal norm of international law. As a concrete effort to this end, Bulgaria will host a regional seminar on the issue later this month.

With regard to conventional arms, anti-personnel landmines are widely recognized as a pernicious weapon which indiscriminately kills and maims hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. Convinced of the need for a total prohibition of anti-personnel mines, on 29 July this year the Bulgarian Parliament ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, thus contributing to its early entry into force.

We are also ready to contribute to the efforts of the international community to reduce conventional weapons, including small arms, and especially their excessive and destabilizing accumulation in areas of conflict. We regard universal participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an important step towards effective transparency, both on a regional and a global scale.

In the context of the new challenges in the field of international peace and security, United Nations peacekeeping operations continue to be an essential element in the Organization's activities. My country appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure wide support for these and to put in place the necessary arrangements that will enable the United Nations to deploy peacekeeping forces rapidly and effectively in areas of conflict. We are convinced that the new generation of peacekeeping operations should include in their mandates a proportional combination of political, military, humanitarian, reconstruction and other relevant activities. In this regard, we believe that there are still unused opportunities to strengthen United Nations cooperation with regional organizations in the field of preventive diplomacy, crisis management and peacekeeping.

In conclusion, I would like once again to declare my country's readiness to cooperate actively with all other Member States in the successful implementation of the lofty goals of the present session of the General Assembly. We are confident that our discussions on the important agenda items before us will be translated into practical measures.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.